

## BOOK REVIEW

FRED DORTORT. 2011. **The Timber Press Guide to Succulent Plants of the World.** (ISBN: 9780881929959, hbk). Timber Press, The Haseltine Building, 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204-3527, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.timberpress.com, 1-800-327-5680, 1-503-227-3070 fax). \$49.95, 344 pp., 755 color photos, 2 maps, 8 3/4" × 11 1/4".

The author's opening comment in his preface states, "The first time I visited a succulent plant nursery, I felt as if I'd been handed the key to an odd but very interesting room. I saw plants there that resembled flowers, plants that looked like rocks, and plants that fit no familiar description at all." He was totally "hooked"! Or, as he wrote, "... the owners themselves...were both extremely enthusiastic and extraordinarily knowledgeable about their plants." And, obviously, so was he.

Dortort was attracted to Berkeley's University of California Botanical Garden, fascinated by their "scientifically organized" plant collections and smitten with the desire to get involved. Soon he armed himself with a paperback book and headed "to the great Southwest to look for the rarest, most localized plants in North America." This was the beginning of his extensive and thorough work with succulents.

This is not only a beautifully illustrated book, it is carefully planned: descriptions are well written and thorough. While most of us think we're fairly knowledgeable about succulents, the comprehensive inclusion of both photographs and carefully written descriptions bring the reader into a far more extensive awareness of the many diverse species. One can spend hours gazing at the incredible diversity of plants included in this genre.

Chapter 1 explains and beautifully illustrates the diversity of succulents as they grow in nature. Chapter 2 gives an overall description and illustrations of succulents in cultivation. Chapters 3–29 deal with specific genera.

Dortort does an excellent job of describing the various genera, carefully explaining various locations, plant parts, and the many unusual aspects of these plants. Not only is the photography outstandingly clear and beautiful, the diversity of types, locations, and distinctively different shapes are astounding—strange, unexpected, sometimes beautiful, and fascinating!

This is a volume for which the reader will need—and want!—to take ample time to look at illustrations, carefully read descriptions, and keep going back and forth through the pages, fascinated by the unexpected beauty and diversity of these genera.—*Helen Jude, Volunteer & Assistant Editor, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.*